

## The Flying Finn's American Sojourn: Hannes Kolehmainen in the United States, 1912–1921

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### **Abstract:**

Shortly after he won three gold medals and one silver medal in distance running events at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, Finland's Hannes Kolehmainen immigrated to the United States. He spent nearly a decade living in Brooklyn, plying his trade as a mason and dominating the amateur endurance running circuit in his adopted homeland. He became a naturalised US citizen in 1921 but returned to Finland shortly thereafter. During his American sojourn, the US press depicted him simultaneously as an exotic foreign athlete and as an immigrant shaped by his new environment into a symbol of successful assimilation. Kolehmainen's career raised questions about sport and national identity – both Finnish and American – about the complexities of immigration during the floodtide of European migration to the US, and about native and adopted cultures in shaping the habits of success. His return to Finland ultimately turned the American 'melting pot' narrative on its head.

**Keyword:** Hannes Kolehmainen | Olympic games | nationalism | immigration | Finland | distance running | marathon

### **Article:**

For nearly a decade at the beginning of the twentieth century, a smooth-striding Finn who had immigrated to Brooklyn to lay brick starred in American track and field meets. The media, coaches and rivals considered him the greatest distance runner of his time and perhaps the greatest of all time. He once held every American and most world records from 3 to 10 miles. He was dubbed a 'Flying Finn', a distance-running international celebrity whose prowess allegedly put his tiny nation on the global map as it made a rocky transition from Russian protectorate to independent nation.<sup>1</sup> His Finnish endurance champion descendants, from the peerless Paavo

Nurmi to the indefatigable Lasse Viren, won a trove of gold medals and set a multitude of endurance running records. Indeed, he reputedly laid the cornerstone for a Finnish distance running dynasty that convinced the world during the first half of the twentieth century that his small nation at the northern margin of Europe contained most of the premiere specimens of human endurance talent, a mantle that a later generation of East African runners has seized since the 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

Hannes Kolehmainen first captured global attention at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics with a series of stellar performances in distance races.<sup>3</sup> American observers heralded the fleet feet and marvellous stamina of the man who before his summertime heroics in Sweden was a complete unknown in the United States, though his older brother William Kolehmainen was familiar to some American sports fans for his feats as a professional runner.<sup>4</sup> Just a few weeks after the 1912 Olympics, Hannes Kolehmainen, accompanied by his brother William, immigrated to the United States and began a remarkable career that highlighted a variety of important historical themes in American sport and American society during the early twentieth century. The 'Flying Finn's' American sojourn revealed the complexities of immigration and identity, amateurism and professionalism, work and war. Kolehmainen's American experiences exposed the contested terrain surrounding notions of social class, citizenship, nationalism and celebrity. His American career underscored that turn-of-the-century New York City had become a global economic, media, and sports capital. His acceptance by the public illuminated the ways in which he was treated as both an exotic import and a quasi-American. The manner in which Americans celebrated and commemorated Kolehmainen also display an older version of an American 'sportsworld' where, unlike today, track and field athletics was a major spectator sport.

### **Kolehmainen Story in the Narratives of the 'Great Age' of American Immigration**

Hannes Kolehmainen's Stockholm feats made him a household name among American sports fans, particularly in an Olympic games at which much of the American press heralded the prowess of US medal winners as symbols of the 'melting pot', the turn-of-the-century American social theory that proclaimed robust immigration and ethnic diversity as the key to national strength. Though some European critics condemned the American Olympic team as an assemblage of 'immigrant mercenaries', American proponents of the melting pot heralded the victories of their legion of champions who were immigrants or the recent progeny of immigrants as proof that the United States stood as the globe's superior society.<sup>5</sup>

The melting-pot triumphs of the American team at the 1912 Olympics took place against the backdrop of the great age of immigration in US history. From 1865 to 1914, more than 25 million people (nearly 90% of them from Europe) came to the United States to seek economic opportunities and/or to escape political and religious persecution. That migration, the largest in modern world history to any one nation, changed the social fabric of the United States. In major cities in the first two decades of the twentieth century, census-takers discovered that more than 50% and as much as 75% of the inhabitants had been born overseas. This 'new' immigration, as historians have characterised it, increasingly drew migrants from beyond the original British and German nodes of migration to America. Hordes of people from southern and eastern Europe came, as did multitudes from Scandinavia.<sup>6</sup> Finnish immigrants settled in rural and urban locales

all over the United States. A vibrant community of skilled Finnish craftsman and labourers grew up in turn-of-the-century New York City.<sup>7</sup> The Finnish-American community cheered Hannes Kolehmainen's feats and hoped to see him repeat them in the future. They were of course thrilled when he came to New York shortly after the 1912 Olympics.<sup>8</sup>

The Stockholm games made young Hannes Kolehmainen, the running prodigy from the Finnish hinterlands, into a national and an international celebrity with an American fan base. But it did not bring the unemployed Olympic star who had practiced his running as a member of a working-class athletic club and who had learned the mason's craft from his working-class comrades, a job or an income.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Kolehmainen had the example of his older brother William, who had once aspired to Olympian fame as an 'amateur' star but who told his family and the press that he had to turn professional to put food on the table for the Kolehmainen family. A contemporary Finnish observer of the Kolehmainen running dynasty contended that 'conditions in his [William's] trade, brick-laying, were so bad that he turned professional for the sake of bread and butter'.<sup>10</sup>

In such a climate, Hannes Kolehmainen's decision to flee Russian-controlled Finland 'for the sake of bread and butter' in New York City as soon as he was poised to become a Finnish national hero seems thoroughly unsurprising, though it created a brief international controversy at the time.<sup>11</sup> After a few races in the British Isles,<sup>12</sup> the Kolehmainen brothers traversed the Atlantic together, making the crossing in the grim steerage compartments deep in the hold of a steamer that departed from Glasgow, Scotland. They arrived seven days later on 1 September 1912, at the infamous immigration processing centre at Ellis Island in New York harbour. Controversy swirled about the intentions of the two newest Finnish immigrants. The *Washington Post* reported that the Kolehmainens had come 'to seek their fortunes in America', both in their masonry trade and on the running tracks. William declared to immigration authorities that he would run professionally in the US while Hannes insisted that he would also continue to race but maintain his amateur standing.<sup>13</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* offered a conflicting account, asserting that both brothers had told authorities that '[t]hey had not come over here to take part in the sports or athletics of this country' but to find fortune as New York stone-wrights.<sup>14</sup>

It quickly became clear that the *Washington Post* had better sources than the *Chicago Tribune*. The brothers settled in a Finnish enclave in Brooklyn and immediately began running. Their appearance as headliners on American soil followed the path blazed a few years earlier by Dorando Pietri, the Italian runner who had initially been awarded the victory at the 1908 London Olympic marathon. Pietri, however, was disqualified for being helped across the finish line after he collapsed in exhaustion at the end of the race by overly enthusiastic British officials who wanted to make sure that Johnny Hayes, the US runner trailing Pietri, did not win the race. The ensuing controversy made both Pietri and Hayes into major stars. Clever American entrepreneurs convinced the two principals from the 1908 marathon to turn professional and then imported Pietri to the US shortly after the London Olympics and matched the Italian hero in a series of races against Hayes and other professional pedestrians.<sup>15</sup>

Following in the professional footsteps of Pietri and Hayes, William continued his running career, adding a New York training ground to his original base in Glasgow, Scotland.<sup>16</sup>

‘M’Crea Beats Kolehmainen’, *New York Times*, January 4, 1915. According to the best biography of the Kolehmainens, William migrated to the US in 1910 but moved to Scotland when he became a professional pedestrian in 1911. In subsequent years, he lived and raced on both sides of the Atlantic, never settling back in Finland. Viita, *Hymyilevä Hannes*, 102, 107–9, 165–6, 188. View all notes Hannes, however, retained his amateur standing and made New York his home base when he announced that he had joined one of the most powerful amateur athletic associations in the US, the world-famous Irish-American Athletic Club (IAAC), home to national and Olympic champions of both Irish and a variety of other descents. Indeed, in addition to such Irish-American stalwarts as John Flanagan, Pat McDonald and Matt McGrath, the IAAC provided a home for Jewish stars Abel Kiviat and Meyer Prinstein as well as a variety of other European immigrants and even the African-American sprinter John B. Taylor.<sup>17</sup> A Canadian sports wag asserted that Hannes Kolehmainen had come to the US to make his fortune in amateur track meets and not laying bricks, jesting that the ‘reason why this world famous athlete bearing the Celtic name of Kolehmainen will join the Irish-American organization is that the members of the club were first at the pier when the ship came in with Kolehmainen on board. Otherwise he might have conceivably become affiliated with the Greek-American Athletic Club, the Chinese American Athletic Club, or the Hebrew American Athletic Club’.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, Kolehmainen had been recruited long before he reached the pier at Ellis Island. Later accounts made it clear that American athletic leaders in Stockholm for the 1912 games, such as American Olympic Committee (AOC) chief and Amateur Athletic Union leader (AAU) James Edward Sullivan, who was also a long-time power-broker of IAAC, and Lawson Robertson, the 1912 AOC track coach who also served as the IAAC track coach, recruited Hannes Kolehmainen for their powerful club.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 1.** Hannes Kolehmainen (on the left) and his brother Willie, the professional runner-cum-coach, posing in a New York City studio soon after the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. Courtesy of The Sports Museum of Finland.



**Figure 2.** Willie Kyrönen pips Hannes Kolehmainen to the post in the controversial 1916 New York City road race. The Sports Museum of Finland.

New York City in 1912, where the IAAC made its home, represented the ‘golden door’ not just for skilled Finnish masons looking for abundant jobs and decent wages but for amateur track and field athletes from the US and around the world. In an era in which amateur track and field meets regularly drew thousands and even tens of thousands of paying spectators to outdoor and indoor venues in New York and other major cities, prominent amateur athletic clubs and sports promoters stood to make considerable sums staging meets. The IAAC and its great metropolitan rival, the New York Athletic Club (NYAC) anchored the national amateur track and field industry that thrived in the early twentieth-century United States. While William Kolehmainen soon discovered that he had to globetrot back to Europe to get paid openly on the international professional running circuit, Hannes Kolehmainen drew lucrative expense reimbursements and appearance fees while running almost exclusively on the thriving metropolitan New York City track meet scene, and making occasional appearances at a few meets in other US cities.<sup>20</sup>

### **Becoming an ‘American’ Star**

The newly arrived Finnish immigrant immediately got to work, on the track rather than in the masonry trade. He ran his first race on American soil in late September in Pittsburgh where his five-mile event became the ‘feature’ that AAU promoters used to sell tickets to fans. Indeed,

the *New York Times* declared that Kolehmainen's appearance in Pittsburgh made the event 'the greatest athletic meet ever held in this city'. Kolehmainen easily triumphed in the 'feature'. Though AAU regulations prohibited Kolehmainen from officially winning points for his new club before he served a six-month probationary period, the press credited his maiden American victory to the IAAC's column in their ongoing battle with their great rival, the NYAC, and the other AAU teams that entered the Pittsburgh fray.<sup>21</sup>

Over the next 21 months, Kolehmainen ran dozens and dozens of races and drew many thousands of fans, on outdoor tracks and on indoor boards, in cross-country meets and in contests from 1500 m to 15 miles, in handicap races and even as a solo racer against relay teams of as many runners. He won most of his races against the cream of the crop of American distance runners, Olympic veterans Gaston Strobino, George Bonhag and Abel Kiviat, as well as veteran AAU champions Billy Queal, William Kramer and Harry Smith.<sup>22</sup> Assessing his races as an aggregate, Kolehmainen in less than two years set records against sterling competition at a rate never before or never since equalled. Tracks fans marvelled in 1913 that out of the 92 new AAU records set during the year almost half of them, an astonishing 43 had been set by Kolehmainen.<sup>23</sup>

During his stellar early career on American soil, the press and race promoters marketed Kolehmainen as a strange and exotic 'Flying Finn', especially suited by his upbringing, environment and national culture to succeed in endurance running. American sporting entrepreneurs had a long history of using ethnic athletes to draw crowds of immigrants to footraces, prize-fighting matches and a host of other events.<sup>24</sup> Just a few years earlier, American agents had brought 1908 Olympic marathon star Dorando Pietri to the United States for a tour and targeted Italian-American fans. The prospect of Kolehmainen drawing droves of Scandinavian-American spectators dazzled the imaginations of track promoters. Certainly, those promoters were well aware that a film of the Stockholm Olympics drew huge audiences in New York and other cities, with cinema operators estimating 25% of the crowd as Swedes or Finns. According to one New York City theatre manager, 'Swedes cheer like mad, but their effort is weak beside the shout that the Finns set up when Kolehmainen races into the stadium in the lead of the cross country championship'.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, however, the press and track promoters increasingly depicted Kolehmainen as an 'American', the winner of American national championships and the setter of American national records. By 1913, the American athletic establishment had selected the immigrant Kolehmainen as the leading runner on their 'All-American' track squad.<sup>26</sup> Kolehmainen's rise to American stardom was not entirely without controversy, however, as his amateur standing and his immigration status eventually came under scrutiny on several occasions for a variety of reasons.

In his first few months in the United States, the press and public concentrated more on his performances than on his adherence to the rules of amateurism. Kolehmainen regularly drew thousands of spectators to meets that normally attracted only hundreds. His fame made him a major drawing card. Kolehmainen competed almost every week, a racing schedule that no twenty-first-century endurance runner would ever attempt. At one point during his first autumn

in the US, he ran four races in an eight-day span. The wear and tear of his intense schedule soon showed in his performances. In October, Kolehmainen ran a match-race against his fellow IAAC teammate and 1912 Olympic medallist, Abel Kiviat. The two-mile contest drew a large crowd to witness the face-off between two world's best racers. Eyewitnesses gave Kolehmainen a six-inch victory but in the bedlam of the event, the official timekeeper dropped his timing watch and so the AAU referees declared the contest a draw.<sup>27</sup>

A few weeks later a tired Kolehmainen ran his first indoor race, losing to Kiviat in a rematch of the thrilling tie.<sup>28</sup> By November, running against Strobino, Kramer, Smith and a deep field in the national cross-country championships held annually at New York City's Van Cortland Park, Kolehmainen succumbed to fatigue and nagging injuries, dropping out after two-and-a-half miles even though he was in the lead.<sup>29</sup> As winter cold descended on North America, Kolehmainen decided that rather than rest and recover he would instead ply his running trade indoors. Fans continued to buy tickets to watch him run and he performed in a variety of exhibitions, relay contests, and handicap races in New York City's armouries and in other venues and cities. Though he did not win every handicap or exhibition, he recovered enough during the indoor season to set a slew of American records.<sup>30</sup> In one amazing race in an arena in Buffalo, New York, Kolehmainen defeated a five-man relay team. He ran the entire distance himself as his opponents took turns trying to conquer him. He set an indoor world record for 10 miles in the race, while also eclipsing the world's record at nine, eight, seven and six miles in the course of his circuit. The press announced that his Buffalo feat, which one reporter dubbed 'unparalleled in the history of athletics', proved he had returned to the form he had displayed at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics.<sup>31</sup>

As spring turned to summer, a reenergised Kolehmainen returned outdoors and continued his record-setting, title-grabbing form. In a period of three months, he won a 'world's title' at 15 miles and a 'modified' (about half the distance of a regular marathon at 12 and 3/8ths miles) marathon. He drew 10,000 spectators to watch him run a handicap race at the Post Office Clerks Games and drew another large crowd just to watch him fire the starter's pistol at the Coney Island Derby. Indeed, he had been barred from running at the Coney Island event because organisers feared any race he entered would be too one-sided to draw paying customers.<sup>32</sup>

Having served his six-month probationary period as a member of the IAAC, Kolehmainen was now free to earn points for the team that recruited him to the United States. In July, he travelled with his teammates to Chicago for the AAU National Championships. Kolehmainen easily triumphed in the 5-mile race. His points helped the IAAC take first place over the NYAC and their other club rivals.<sup>33</sup> A few weeks later Kolehmainen won another 5-mile race in Chicago, besting a team of five relay runners to win by 100 yards and setting an American record at the distance.<sup>34</sup> Returning to New York, Kolehmainen led the IAAC to a capstone victory over the NYAC in a major meet at Travers Island.<sup>35</sup> In November, with his brother William cheering him from the sidelines, Kolehmainen won the American championship at 10 miles. In that race Kolehmainen just missed bettering the world mark at the distance then held by the renowned English professional runner Alfred Shrubbs. Kolehmainen did manage an American record,

however, besting George Bonhag's mark. Kolehmainen also set 26 intermediary American records at varying distances during his 10-mile jaunt.<sup>36</sup>

Kolehmainen ran into more difficulties off the track than on the track during the summer and fall of 1913. In June of 1913, en route to Chicago for the national AAU championships, Kolehmainen received word that he and four other athletes had been suspended by the Registration Committee of the Metropolitan Association of AAU– the New York City branch of the leading US amateur organisation.<sup>37</sup> Kolehmainen quickly ran out of that trouble. The day after he received the suspension, Kolehmainen (or, more likely, someone on his behalf) turned in a list of expenses incurred and pledged to pay the outstanding \$2.50 (\$53 in current USD) in 'extra' funding that Paterson officials had given him.<sup>38</sup> Kolehmainen then led the IAAC to victory at the Chicago AAU National Championships.<sup>39</sup>

In November of 1913, a more serious challenge to Kolehmainen's amateur status arose, shortly after he earned the 10-mile national title. The Registration Committee of the Metropolitan Association of the AAU opened an investigation into Kolehmainen's 'mode of living and sources of his income'. The numerous winner's prizes, expense reimbursements and appearance fees he garnered had made Kolehmainen a prime target for jealous rivals. The committee called the runner in for questioning and demanded that he present them all the prizes he had won since his arrival in the United States more than a year earlier.<sup>40</sup> Sources speculated that prizes Kolehmainen had won were worth of over \$1,000 (approximately \$22,000 USD today). His handlers asked for a delay in the hearing when they learned that Terrence Farley, a member of the IAAC's Board of Governors who had been slated to represent the non-English-speaking Finn at the hearing would be out-of-town during the trial.<sup>41</sup>

The investigation ground forward but even without his assigned IAAC defender it turned out that Kolehmainen had little about which to worry. Kolehmainen appeared before the committee and answered questions relating to the prizes, though whether his replies were in Finnish or English was unclear. According to the press covering the hearing, Kolehmainen even 'insisted upon ... making note of several [prizes] which they [the committee] had made no mention'. The press contended the entire affair was a farce. 'No request was made of him as to his mode of living, why he had no means of livelihood, or the like', a reporter guffawed. Whatever the intentions of the initial inquiry, the Metropolitan AAU dropped the case after Kolehmainen's appearance. Afterward, the committee member George P. Mathews quickly announced the committee's charges had all been dropped. The *New York Times* marvelled that 'the much heralded investigation ... proved to have about as much substance as the mist before the morning sun'.<sup>42</sup>

Restored to the amateur standing that allowed him to collect lucrative prizes and expenses, Kolehmainen returned to action in the Metropolitan Cross-Country Championship at Van Cortlandt Park in mid-November. More than 5000 spectators watched as Kolehmainen set a course record in vanquishing what the press labelled as perhaps the best field ever entered. Kolehmainen and his IAAC teammates won the team title for their club as well.<sup>43</sup> Training for the December National Cross-Country Championships slated for the same Van Cortlandt Park course, Kolehmainen sustained a serious injury. With Kolehmainen out, his teammate and rival



Abel Kiviat won the national championship, leading the IAAC to a first-place tie with the NYAC in the team standings.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the late season injury, the press and fans judged Kolehmainen's 1913 season a grand success. A *New York Times* correspondent declared that the 'marvel of the 1912 Olympics' had become 'the leading figure in the athletics of the United States'.<sup>45</sup> Another expert in the same newspaper concurred, heralding Kolehmainen's 'wholesale demolition of longstanding marks', and noting that the Finn set 45 American records.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, though not an American citizen, many observers asserted that his successes were beneficial to the future of American track and field and symbolic of the strength and determination of the enrichment that immigration brought to American society. Looking back on the 1913 landmarks in sport James Sullivan, the powerful leader of the AAU and the American Olympic movement who had helped bring the Finn to the US, speculated: It is true that more than half the records established during the past year were made by Hannes Kolehmainen, but such sensational performances as he has made are bound to reflect upon the younger and growing athlete and act as a stimulus for greater efforts on his part which will show in years to come.<sup>47</sup>

A Finn in America, Kolehmainen earned the honour of 'All-American' in track in field.<sup>48</sup>

### **A Controversial Match Race**

Kolehmainen's leg injury that had kept him from defending his American cross-country title lingered into the winter indoor season and hampered his training. Still gimpy in late January 1914, Kolehmainen nevertheless agreed to face-off against Kiviat in a two-mile match-race that promoters dubbed the foot-racing 'championship of the world'. However, AAU and AOC potentate James Sullivan barred race organisers and the Thirteenth Regiment National Guard Armory from using any reference to a world championship, arguing that such hyperbole was restricted exclusively for the Olympic games.<sup>49</sup>

In spite of the Sullivan's ban of world championship rhetoric, the match-up drew tremendous interest in New York City. Thousands of fans packed the Armory for the 25 January event, a gala headlined by the Kolehmainen–Kiviat race that included several other footraces and bicycle races. Once again, Kolehmainen and Kiviat finished in a 'dead heat'. Unlike their previous match-race, where fans were thrilled by a tie, their meagre time of 10:05:8 and their lead-footed running aroused the wrath of spectators. Much of the crowd thought the race had been fixed. A *New York Times* correspondent reported that 'cries of "fake" and "frame up" ... could be heard through [a] storm of hoots and jeers'. The scribe added that even 'the officials of the games looked on the event with suspicion'.<sup>50</sup>

The *New York Globe* sportswriter Howard Valentine immediately came to the defence of Kolehmainen and Kiviat. Valentine admitted that a 'more miserable contest to watch there never was' and described the runners as 'reeling along like a couple of 4 am drunks', but maintained 'it was not a fake race'. Kiviat's employer, a race official, also defended the honour of the runners, insisting, '[i]f I thought Kiviat had taken part in a framed race I would throw him out of my shop. I wouldn't bother opening the door either; I'd chuck him right through the plate glass'.<sup>51</sup> Kolehmainen's coach also leapt to the defence of the IAAC's dynamic distance tandem. Lawson

Robertson denounced their detractors as ‘liars’ and declared that the race was marred by the fact that Kolehmainen was injured and Kiviat was ill.<sup>52</sup>

In spite of those spirited defences, the furore over their uninspired ‘dead heat’ compelled the Metropolitan AAU to suspend Kolehmainen and Kiviat pending a thorough investigation.<sup>53</sup> Through an interpreter, Kolehmainen testified to the investigators that he was injured and had run as fast as he could under the circumstances. Kiviat produced a doctor who revealed that the IAAC star had run in spite of the physician's advice to drop out of the race. Both men insisted that the race had not been fixed. Kiviat threatened to quit the sport if the AAU did not repair his reputation. A dozen witnesses supported the claims made by the runners. The Metropolitan AAU relented, reinstating both runners and clearing them of any wrong-doing. The bureaucrats did censure the athletic officials of the Thirteenth Regiment, alleging that since the race organisers had known of the poor condition of both runners, they should have cancelled the event rather than allowed the debacle.<sup>54</sup>

### **A Finn or an American? History and Identity**

Reinstated once again to full amateur standing, Kolehmainen continued his busy race schedule. He struggled to overcome his injury throughout the winter indoor season, finally rounding into form in March. As his leg improved, American and world marks once again began to fall.<sup>55</sup> As winter gave way to spring, word spread that Kolehmainen was moving back to Europe after nearly two years in the United States. The *New York Times* confirmed the rumours, reporting that Kolehmainen was bound for Sweden to compete for Finland in the Baltic Games. Through an interpreter, Kolehmainen announced he was headed for France after his scheduled races in Sweden to take on his French nemesis Jean Bouin in a 10-mile match-race – a contest that never materialised.<sup>56</sup> The ‘Flying Finn’ appeared ready to give up on his American experiment and head home. His career as an ‘All-American’ appeared at an end. He seemed ready to step back through the ‘golden door’ and return to the land of his birth. He would not be the first immigrant, nor the last, to make that roundtrip.

Before his departure, however, the ‘Flying Finn’ had one more impressive feat up his sleeve. In May, he defended his title in the *New York Evening Mail* modified marathon, a 13-mile, 200-yard race through the streets of New York City. Kolehmainen ran a superb race, breaking away from Gaston Strobino and Harry Smith and setting a course record with a time of 1:09:12. Kolehmainen won in such ‘a clear cut manner’ that the *New York Times* averred, ‘there is no doubt as to his right to the title “the wonderful Finn”.’ Finishing in front of City Hall Kolehmainen received a huge ovation from American race fans. ‘In leaving [for Finland]’, the New York daily proclaimed, Kolehmainen ‘carries with him the laurels of one of the greatest races of his career’.<sup>57</sup> A few days later Kolehmainen set sail from a Brooklyn pier for his homeland. Surrounded by a delegation from the Finnish-American Kaleva Athletic Club of Brooklyn, a team that he ran for when he was not wearing the colours of the IAAC, Kolehmainen promised he was not leaving the United States permanently. He announced, in Finnish, not English, that he would return after he fulfilled his European racing commitments and spent a summer visiting family in Finland. As proof of his sincerity, he left behind two trunks of prizes he had won while competing in the United States.<sup>58</sup> In spite of that gesture,

American track cognoscenti doubted that they would ever see the 'Flying Finn' run on American soil again.

### **Kolehmainen Returns 'Home'**

In September of 1914, as Europe descended into the maelstrom of the Great War, Kolehmainen suddenly reappeared in the United States. The American press and American track officials had not received any advance notice that he was returning until he showed up at Celtic Park, the home grounds of the IAAC, for practice. The story of Kolehmainen's return gradually emerged. After visiting his brother William in Edinburgh, Scotland, Kolehmainen sailed to Finland to visit his family. He continued running in his homeland, winning 14 races. When the 'guns of August' roared and Europe descended into war, Kolehmainen decided the time had come to return to Brooklyn, as he had promised on the dock before he left. Kolehmainen escaped from Europe as the Great War swallowed the continent. The *New York Times* on this a rare occasion actually quoted Kolehmainen speaking in English. The 'Flying Finn' jested that he had 'established a new record from Finland to Sweden' to escape impressments into the Russian army.<sup>59</sup>

In fact, Kolehmainen's allegations that he would have been impressed into service on the Eastern Front did not square with the realities of Finland's role in the war. By 1914, the Finns in the Russian army were volunteers, not conscripts. Finnish professional soldiers who had chosen careers in the Russian military certainly fought in the First World War but Russia did not resort to a mass conscription in the Grand Duchy to provide cannon fodder for the struggle against the Germans. Some Finns were drafted in 1916 to bolster Finnish homeland defences but did not serve in combat against the Germans. Indeed, several thousand Finns secretly went to Germany at the beginning of the war and formed a Finnish Jäger Battalion, leading Russian authorities to conclude that Finns would make unreliable allies and to scrap any thoughts of conscripting them into the war effort.<sup>60</sup>

With no luggage and little money, the Finnish champion had returned to New York City without notifying anyone that he was on his way.<sup>61</sup> Visibly out of shape, Kolehmainen was not initially ready to return to elite competition. He quickly recovered his form and by October of 1914, he was back in competition. Over the next three months, he defended his title as the American champion at 10-miles and won both the Metropolitan AAU and the National AAU cross-country titles, leading the IAAC to a team victory in the latter two competitions as well. In May of 1915, he thrilled a throng of 20,000 who crowded the finish line at New York's City Hall to take his third consecutive win in the *New York Evening Mail's* modified marathon. Over the summer, he travelled to San Francisco where the Pan-Pacific Exposition of 1915 staged the AAU national track and field championships. At this Pan-Pacific 'Olympics', as the American press labelled the meet, Kolehmainen won the 5-mile and 10-mile races. In a huge upset, Kolehmainen's IAAC lost the top spot to the host, San Francisco's Olympic Club.<sup>62</sup>

During the fall of 1915, Kolehmainen kept winning, earning another American title at 10 miles and winning another Metropolitan AAU cross-country crown. Favoured to defend his national AAU cross-country title, a December blizzard in New York postponed the race. In January of 1916 at the rescheduled national cross-country meet in Van Cortlandt Park, Kolehmainen

finished second but still led the IAAC to another team victory. Indeed, his second place in cross-country race was his only defeat in a non-handicap race since his return to the US in September of 1914. The only blemish on his otherwise perfect record was another brief, quickly overturned AAU suspension for failing to turn in an expense report from an indoor meet. He was in good company in that fracas as 33 other leading athletic stars were suspended for the same violation.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Americanisation of the ‘Flying Finn’**

As spring broke in New York City in 1916, Hannes Kolehmainen stood on top of the American sports world. A 1916 essay in the *New York Times* crowned Kolehmainen ‘the greatest long distance runner who ever drew on a spiked shoe’. The same article argued that Kolehmainen's specialty, distance running, was ‘too many the most attractive division of athletics, ... a specialty which requires of a man at the same time stamina, speed, skill, and brains’.<sup>64</sup> In American narratives, Kolehmainen had escaped war-torn Europe and found steady work as a mason and even a steadier income as an amateur track champion. He had set practically every American record and a bundle of world records at distances from 1500 m to 15 miles. Though the press never noted whether he had acquired any familiarity with the English language, they increasingly portrayed the Finnish immigrant as a member of the American social fabric rather than an alien standing outside of the mainstream.

In a multitude of ways, the American media depicted the ‘Flying Finn’ as the perfect immigrant, a model citizen who contributed to the commonweal. The American media portrayed Kolehmainen's ethnicity not as a threat but rather as a colourful addition to the melting pot.<sup>65</sup> He fit the typical Scandinavian stereotypes – reserved, stoic and enigmatic but also affable, good-natured and even-tempered. The press depicted Kolehmainen as an exemplar of clean-living, a teetotaler who drank only milk and ate only fish, oatmeal and vegetables. Neither alcohol nor meat fouled his system, in stark contrast to media accounts of the drunken and carnivorous portraits of wicked immigrants who sullied the melting pot.<sup>66</sup>

As all good immigrants, Kolehmainen possessed an exemplary work ethic. In an era when few athletes trained on a daily basis, stories about the ‘Flying Finn’ abounded with accounts of his extraordinary training habits. He arose every morning at 6:00 a.m. for a 2-hour walk, a daily regimen that inclement weather never interrupted. After long days hauling and laying brick and stone, he took to the streets of New York and ran prodigious distances. Kolehmainen epitomised the hard-working immigrant.<sup>67</sup>

The media heralded his Finnish heritage as one source of his success, commenting routinely on his spare Finnish diet, his love of saunas and massages and his devotion to Finnish gymnastics to balance his constant running. The press marvelled at the lifetime supply of endurance he had built in a Finnish childhood devoted to cross-country skiing and other exercises on the extreme frontier of his homeland. Correspondents also pointed to the endurance talent that ran in his family, explaining that his siblings, older brothers William and Tatu, younger brother Kalle, and even his sister Maija, were accomplished runners. American sources also proclaimed that endurance talent was spread widely among the general population of Finland.<sup>68</sup>

While the press celebrated his Finnish heritage, reporters increasingly transformed him into an 'American' hero rather than an exotic foreigner. Indeed, while the media still labelled other imported athletes who plied their craft on US soil, such as the Canadian walker George Goulding by their birth nations, the adjective 'Finn' sometimes disappeared in front of Kolehmainen's name in newspapers, indicating his increasingly 'Americanised' status.<sup>69</sup> He set 'American' records and made 'all-American' teams. He competed only irregularly for his native kin, running a few times in Scandinavian-American meets for the Kaleva Athletic Club of New York and defending Finnish immigrant prowess against their Norwegian, Swedish and Danish rivals.<sup>70</sup> Kolehmainen starred mainly for an 'American' club that won 'American' championships, albeit one with deep roots in the immigrant landscape, the IAAC. In an ironic twist in American ethnic tapestry, commentators noted that Kolehmainen was the most reliable scorer for the IAAC from his return to the US in 1914 through the winter of 1916, outpacing even his great Gaelic-American teammate, the hammer-thrower Patrick 'Paddy' Ryan.<sup>71</sup>

### **Kolehmainen Dashes towards Citizenship and Family Life**

In the winter of 1916 Kolehmainen made a decision that moved him further down the path to Americanisation, and towards American citizenship. He walked across the street from his Brooklyn home to the armoury of the Fourteenth Regiment of the National Guard and signed on as a reservist. Kolehmainen's desire to continue his athletic career was a major part of his decision. Metropolitan New York in that era was home to 12 National Guard regiments. Each regiment sponsored a track and field team, and an intense rivalry had developed between the units as they sought after the city's athletic stars. Every regiment recruited Kolehmainen. The fact that Lawson Robertson, his IAAC coach, also headed the 14th Regiment's team convinced Kolehmainen to join the Brooklyn unit. Another factor in the 'Flying Finn's' sign-up was the fact that guard service enhanced his chances for citizenship. Indeed, a foreigner could not join unless they had, as the Militia Act of 1903 put it, 'declared his intention to become a citizen'. An additional factor in Kolehmainen's decision, and that of other immigrants who joined while the United States teetered on the brink of moving from neutrality to active engagement on the Allied side during the First World War was the general perception that National Guard units would not be used for overseas combat but would remain at home and fulfil their traditional duties policing riots and breaking strikes. His decision to join the US National Guard in 1916 was motivated by his desire to stay out of the war.<sup>72</sup>

On 10 January 1916, Kolehmainen got his vaccinations and mustered into the unit. But he suddenly realised that he had made a three-year commitment, and that he might be called on to shoot striking workers – a daunting prospect for someone who had come of age in Finnish working class athletic clubs and as a mason was a member of the American labouring fraternity. In a panic, he bolted from the armoury and ran home, claiming his poor grasp of English had allowed the unit's leaders to mislead him. Coach Robertson and his friends in the unit eventually convinced Kolehmainen to return and he finished his oath and became a regular member of the unit, starring for the 14th Regiment in track meets against rival regiments. However, when in June of 1916 President Woodrow Wilson called up the New York National Guard to help chase Pancho Villa after the Mexican revolutionary leader raided Columbus, New Mexico, in a widely

publicised attack that killed US citizens, Kolehmainen balked. He claimed that the officers of the 14th Regiment had promised him when he joined that he would only be asked to run and not to fight. He also claimed family hardship, arguing that he had a newborn baby at home and that the \$15 a week his family would receive when he was posted in Mexico was not sufficient to support his family. National Guard commanders granted his petition and allowed him stay in New York while his teammates headed off to Mexico.<sup>73</sup>

Kolehmainen's new family not only saved him from a military posting to Mexico but in the eyes of many observers it also began to erode his intensive training regimen and cool his competitive fires. The Finnish biographer of Kolehmainen, Ossi Viita, has revealed that Kolehmainen did not think it proper for a married man to compete in races and promised his new bride he would retire from competition.<sup>74</sup> According to the American press, Kolehmainen's marriage took place at an October 1915 gala that drew the cream of New York's athletic stars to Brooklyn's Finnish Lutheran Church to witness the 'Flying Finn's' nuptials with the former Alma Johnson.<sup>75</sup> Happily wedded, with a new baby at home, and with his masonry career flourishing, Kolehmainen retreated from his commitment to maintain his standing as the greatest distance runner in the history of the world. Rumours swirled that he would retire. He began to pull out of meets that required long-distance travel. His performances in the meets in which he did compete began to slip as he slacked off in training.<sup>76</sup>

### **Kolehmainen Fades as Another 'Flying Finn' Emerges**

In May of 1916, Kolehmainen made a grand comeback by defending his crown in the *New York Evening Mail's* modified marathon. He had won the race three straight years. A half-million New Yorkers lined the course, cheering Kolehmainen towards a fourth consecutive victory against a field of 1200 competitors. In a thrilling race decided by just a few inches, a Finn once again triumphed. But the victor was William Kyrönen who crossed the finish line with Kolehmainen just one stride behind. The press observed that Kolehmainen 'did not look as strong as usual' in his title defence.<sup>77</sup> According to Ossi Viita's seminal biography of the Kolehmainen, many years later one of Hannes' daughters revealed that the two Finns had a pact to finish in a dead heat but Kyrönen betrayed his countryman. Kolehmainen never spoke to Kyrönen again.<sup>78</sup>

Disheartened by his defeat, and, perhaps, his betrayal, Kolehmainen summoned his brother, William, to return to the US to coach him back into form.<sup>79</sup> William found a position as the new coach of the IAAC after Lawson Robertson resigned his job to take over the track programme at the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>80</sup> But the reunification of the Kolehmainen clan did not stop Hannes' slide. He lost more races to rivals he had dominated in the past. The press wondered if he were injured or ill, or just out-of-shape. Kolehmainen's decline on the track allowed the NYAC to upset the IAAC in several meets over the summer and fall of 1916.<sup>81</sup>

As Kolehmainen slumped, he grew disenchanted with the IAAC. In November of 1916, he deserted the IAAC and petitioned to run unattached in the 10-mile national championship. He cited 'personal' reasons for quitting the IAAC. Without Kolehmainen, the IAAC could not defend its long string of cross-country titles.<sup>82</sup> Kolehmainen's new Finnish rival, Kyrönen, whom the press had taken to calling the 'other Flying Finn', won the race and led the Millrose Athletic

Club to the metropolitan AAU cross-country championship.<sup>83</sup> A few weeks later, in the national AAU cross-country championships, Kolehmainen showed up and ran unattached. Kyrönen beat him and led Millrose to the national crown.<sup>84</sup> As the losses to Kyrönen mounted, one sporting magazine, *The Spur*, declared that Kyrönen had surpassed Kolehmainen for the title of 'best distance runner in the world'.<sup>85</sup>

As 1916 gave way to 1917, Kolehmainen staged a brief comeback. In January, he formally resigned from the IAAC and began training more rigorously.<sup>86</sup> In May, he won the *New York Evening Mail* modified marathon, gaining a measure of revenge over his bitter Finnish rival by beating Kyrönen to the finish line in front of a crowd estimated at 250,000 that lined the streets of New York to witness the battle.<sup>87</sup> But a few months later at a Scandinavian-American League meet, Kyrönen reasserted his superiority and defeated Kolehmainen in a three-mile feature.<sup>88</sup>

While Kolehmainen struggled to find a way to beat Kyrönen, he also searched for a new club to support his running. The IAAC disbanded in April of 1917, as the United States entered the First World War. The IAAC had been a bulwark in Irish-American efforts to prevent the US from entering the war on the side of Great Britain as well as a stalwart supporter of Irish nationalism as a wartime rebellion in Ireland was squelched by the British military. As the US went to war, the IAAC disbanded and commanded its athletes to join the war effort in order to demonstrate loyalty now that the fateful die had been cast and American neutrality had evaporated.<sup>89</sup>

Some of the IAAC's stars joined the armed forces and some joined other clubs. Gaelic stalwarts Matt McGrath and Pat MacDonald did the unthinkable and signed with their hated rival, the NYAC.<sup>90</sup> Kolehmainen briefly signed on with the Finnish American Athletic Club.<sup>91</sup> He even made a feeble attempt to follow his former teammates McGrath and MacDonald and join the NYAC.<sup>92</sup> While his dalliances with other clubs in the wake of the IAAC's demise made news, Kolehmainen's name in the results of American track meets disappeared almost entirely after 1917. A few rumours that he would make appearances circulated but he rarely ran competitively for the next two years.<sup>93</sup>

After the Great War ended, Kolehmainen remained out of the limelight. Then, in August 1919, the New York City newspapers buzzed with the story that Kolehmainen was on the comeback trail. Reporters revealed that Kolehmainen had found steady work as a bricklayer at Staten Island and Philadelphia shipyards and dropped out of competition. With post-war strikes roiling the shipping industry, Kolehmainen suddenly found himself with free time to train. He joined the Todd Shipyards Athletic Association and entered the 1919 Metropolitan AAU championship meet. But the 'Flying Finn' had to drop out of the 5-mile race after just three miles when he developed a 'stitch' in his side.<sup>94</sup> Undaunted, Kolehmainen entered the AAU national championship meet in Philadelphia, held a month later. Once again, he failed even to place in the meet.<sup>95</sup>

In the fall of 1919, Kolehmainen's career seemed at an end. His legendary appetite for training had diminished. He put most of time into laying bricks to support his family. When he raced, he could no longer dominate, nor even finish many of his competitions. In February of 1920, he quit in the middle of three-mile race at the Robins Dry Dock Games.<sup>96</sup> He was 31 years old, an age

considered in that era as past an athlete's prime, even for a distance runner. With the modern Olympic cycle renewed for 1920 after the conclusion of the Great War, the triple gold medallist from Stockholm seemed out-the-running for another shot at international glory, closer to the rocking chair than the top step on an Olympic podium.

### **The 'Flying Finn' Flies Again**

In the summer of 1920, Kolehmainen suddenly reappeared on the global track scene in the marathon, moving up in distance from his earlier specialties at 1500 metres to 15 miles. He surged to victory in the NYAC marathon in June, beating his competition by more than 3 minutes. He vanquished a field of top American runners plus his old Finnish rival William Kyrönen.<sup>97</sup> The NYAC race also served as a qualifier for the US Olympic team. Rumours swirled that Kolehmainen wanted a spot on the US Olympic marathon team even though he had not yet formally completed the American naturalisation process. However, IOC rules in that era required that since he began his Olympic career as a Finn, he forever remain a Finn in the Olympian arena. On the basis of his NYAC marathon performance, Finland's Olympic leaders tabbed him for a spot on their national team.<sup>98</sup>

Back in Finland, a different narrative emerged from the one told by the American press, as Ossi Viita brilliantly details in his study of the Kolehmainen's complex role in Finland's struggle for nationhood.<sup>99</sup> As the collapse of Russia in 1917 brought Finland independence, it also brought the new nation a brief but bitter civil war between the Reds, backed by the new Bolsheviks leading the Russian revolutionary charge, and the Whites, the bourgeois elements in Finland. In a reversal of the results from the Russian revolution, the Whites triumphed over the Reds in Finland's civil war. Deep wounds remained between the factions even as Finland moved to independence.<sup>100</sup> The working-class athletic clubs in which the Kolehmainen brothers first trained for victory opposed the participation of newly independent Finland in the 1920 Olympics, claiming the Olympic movement served the interests of the global bourgeois. William Kolehmainen, however, convinced his brother to abandon any working-class loyalties and to run at the Antwerp games, understanding the immense fame and fortune that another gold medal could bring the family. Finland's bourgeoisie embraced Kolehmainen's crossings of class lines, while his old working-class comrades denounced him as a traitor.<sup>101</sup> In the US, Kolehmainen remained an enigmatic figure as the 1920 Olympics games approached. In Finland, the 'Flying Finn' became a lightning rod for class conflict.

In a stunning comeback to the top rank of international distance running, Kolehmainen set new Olympic and world records (2:32:35.8) in winning the gold medal in the marathon at the Antwerp games. Kolehmainen led a parade of his countrymen who dominated the race as Finns also finished fifth, ninth and tenth. Kolehmainen's brother Tatu earned the tenth-place slot, making the Kolehmainens' Antwerp runs the finest performance by a sibling tandem in Olympic marathon history. The top American finisher was Joseph Organ who placed seventh, nearly 5 minutes behind Kolehmainen.<sup>102</sup>

Kolehmainen's victory made front-page headlines in his new hometown of New York.<sup>103</sup> The American press turned the 'Flying Finn's' victory into a triumph for the United States, arguing



that American society should be credited for his victory since Kolehmainen lived and trained in the United States. Two articles in *The Independent*, an influential journal of political opinion, argued that he was really an American and that his victory, like the victory of immigrants who competed directly for the American team, should be credited to the immigration policies of the United States which rewarded work and talent, unlike the staid, corrupt societies of the 'Old World'.<sup>104</sup>

American Olympic officials made similar claims, while inaccurately implying that Kolehmainen was already a naturalised US citizen. In the official AOC report, long-time American Olympic bureaucrat Frederick Rubien labelled Kolehmainen a 'Finnish-American' rather than a Finn. Rubien explained to his countrymen that international rules prevented Kolehmainen from competing for the US in 1920 since he had competed for Finland in 1912, explaining that the runner 'had no choice in the matter'. With Kolehmainen exonerated of any culpability in his choice of national colours for the 1920 Olympics, Rubien insisted that the large contingent of American fans in Antwerp had treated the marathon champion as if he were one of their own. Rubien insisted that 'the brilliant Finnish runner could have received no greater ovation from the Americans had the fruits of his victory gone to America'.<sup>105</sup> The Finnish press, no doubt sensitive to the insinuations in the American media and from American Olympic officials that Kolehmainen should really be considered an American, painted a very different picture, accusing Americans of lodging complaints after Kolehmainen's victory about the 'Flying Finn's' eligibility in an effort to steal his gold medal away from Finland.<sup>106</sup>

After Antwerp, Kolehmainen returned briefly to New York where he completed the citizenship process and became a US citizen in January of 1921.<sup>107</sup> His life to that point seemed to confirm *The Independent's* glorification of American melting pot as the sole source of success for Europe's huddled masses. Soon thereafter, Kolehmainen again changed the narrative arc of his life story. He left the United States and moved back to Finland where a group of jubilant Finnish businessmen bought him a farm. The Finnish scholar Viita ably chronicles how, back in Finland, Kolehmainen remained a controversial figure, a traitor to some of the socialist firebrands because of his betrayal of his working-class roots but a hero to the rising Finnish middle-classes, a patriot who chose nation over social class, an exemplar held up as a model to Finnish youth and the symbol of bourgeois temperance movement that sought to curb excessive indulgence in intoxicating beverages, particularly among the working classes. His supporters made Kolehmainen into a heroic figure for their new nation. His new property and several successful business ventures made him into a comfortable member of the Finnish middle class.<sup>108</sup>

### **Kolehmainen in American Memories**

With Kolehmainen returned to his homeland, the American press remembered him fondly. The US press covered his European races as his career wound down, including his faltering final performance when he quit in the middle of the race to defend his Olympic marathon crown at Paris in 1924.<sup>109</sup> Back on American soil, the media also evoked Kolehmainen's memory in disputes over whether foreign athletes who built their careers in the United States should run for their native lands or for their adopted homeland. In the 1920s, when IOC rules required that athletes never change the nations for which they competed even if they changed citizenship, the

fact that Kolehmainen starred for Finland in the 1912 Olympics before he ever came to the US meant he was eligible to compete only for his homeland, even after he became an American citizen. Grumbling about allowing foreign stars to build careers in AAU competitions and then beat Americans in the Olympics began in the early 1920s, with some suggesting that Kolehmainen and others should never have been permitted to run in the United States.<sup>110</sup>

The case of another 'Flying Finn', William Ritola, however, quickly transformed Kolehmainen into a more sympathetic figure. Ritola immigrated to the US a year after Kolehmainen, in 1913, at age 17. He settled in another borough of New York City, and went to work in construction as a member of a Finnish bridge-building crew. Ritola had not been a runner in Finland and developed his endurance talent in the US. By the early 1920s, when Kolehmainen returned to Finland, Ritola reigned as best distance runner on American soil, the latest 'Flying Finn'. He took out a citizenship application in 1923 and word spread that he would run for the US at the 1924 Paris Olympics. In December of 1923, however, he shocked the American public and announced that he was returning to Finland and would compete for the land of his birth in the Olympics. The American press noted that while Kolehmainen had not had a choice to compete for the US in the Olympics given IOC rules, Ritola had betrayed his adopted homeland and could have become an American Olympic hero.<sup>111</sup>

At the Paris games, Ritola won four gold and two silver medals in individual and team endurance running events. He did not, as many speculated, remain in Finland, however, and he returned to the Bronx to continue his construction and athletic careers. Some AAU leaders moved to bar Ritola and other foreign athletes who had lived in the US for more than three years but had not begun the naturalisation process for citizenship from sanctioned amateur events. Other AAU officials denounced that proposal as 'un-American'. Ritola, however, outfoxed everyone and became an American citizen. He continued to train and compete in the US while representing Finland in international events. He won a gold medal at 10,000 m and a silver medal at 5000 m in the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. He remained an American citizen and resident for the next four decades, until he returned to Finland in 1971 at the age of 75.<sup>112</sup>

The American press eventually forgave Ritola for choosing Finland over the United States. They did not have to work towards the same sort of forgiveness with Kolehmainen, however, since he never had the choice to compete for the land he immigrated to in 1912 and in which he took citizenship in 1921. American reporters continued to sing Kolehmainen's praises for decades after he retired from competition, painting him as a Finnish national hero who had been shaped by his American experiences and an American national hero who represented the beneficence of melting pot mythology.<sup>113</sup> They made him into the father of the Finnish distance running dynasty that dominated the next several decades of Olympic track field and stretched from 'Hannes the Mighty' to William Ritola and Paavo Nurmi to Lasse Viren. When Kolehmainen passed away in 1966 at the age of 76, the *New York Times* noted that he still held the American indoor records at 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 miles, all set in just one 1913 race. His obituary recalled the 'impeccably smooth stride' that made Kolehmainen a beloved 'Flying Finn' in the United States, a complex figure who symbolised the myth of the melting pot and then returned to play hero in his native land.<sup>114</sup>

## Notes on Contributors

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## Notes

1. Pihkala, 'Kolehmainen the Fastest of Them All', 211–4; 'Smooth Stride Chief Asset of Kolehmainen', *New York Times*, March 5, 1916. See also, Viita, 'A Reluctant Hero'.
2. Bale and Sang, *Kenyan Running*; Bale, *Running Cultures*; Pitsiladis et al., *East African Running*.
3. 'Briton Outpaces American Runners', *New York Times*, July 11, 1912; 'Complete Summary of the Olympic games as Compiled by the Swedish Committee', *New York Times*, August 4, 1912. For an insightful interpretation of how the Swedish press perceived Kolehmainen, see Widholm, 'Smiling Finn'.
4. The *New York Times* covered track extensively and all references to a Kolehmainen prior to the Stockholm games were to William. 'Englewood Takes Meet', *New York Times*, May 19, 1910; 'Holmer Shows Best at Fifteen Miles', *New York Times*, July 3, 1910; 'Dineen Best in Marathon', *New York Times*, July 5, 1910; 'McGrath's Weight Record', *New York Times*, August 21, 1910; 'American Team Wins 20-Mile Race', *New York Times*, November 5, 1910; 'Holmer and Queal Win Marathon Race', *New York Times*, November 30, 1910; 'Holmer Second in Foot Race', *New York Times*, January 3, 1912; 'Longboat's 15-Mile Race', *New York Times*, February 4, 1912. In the US, William was referred to as a 'Flying Finn' while Hannes still lived in Finland. Viita, *Hymyilevä Hannes*, 108. English translation provided by Erkki Vettenniemi.
5. For a more complete history of American proclamations of their melting pot victories in Stockholm, see Dyreson, *Making the American Team*.
6. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans*.
7. Björklund, *Finns over the Atlantic*; Roinila, *The Finnish Immigrant Experience in North America*.
8. Herman Montagu Donner, 'Swedish and Finnish Achievements at Stockholm', *The Independent*, 73, August 15, 1912, 379–82. Donner was a Finnish immigrant to the US and the nephew of a powerful Finnish legislator.
9. Viita, 'A Reluctant Hero'. For an excellent history of the role of Finnish working-class clubs in the politics during this era, see Keskinen, 'Working-Class Sports Clubs', 853–75.
10. Finnish sources claimed William wanted to remain an amateur. Pihkala, 'Kolehmainen the Fastest of Them All', 211–4.

11. 'Finnish Star Coming Across', *Washington Post*, July 25, 1912; 'Kolehmainen Coming Over', *Washington Post*, September 1, 1912.
12. Llewellyn, "'The Best Distance Runner the World has Ever Produced'".
13. 'Finnish Runners in U.S', *Washington Post*, September 3, 1912. (Microfilm copy from the research collection of Alan S. Katchen, Columbus, Ohio. Hereafter, Katchen collection.)
14. 'Finnish Runner in America', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 3, 1912 (Katchen collection).
15. Llewellyn, "'Viva l'Italia! Viva l'Italia!'", 710–36.
16. 'M'Crea Beats Kolehmainen', *New York Times*, January 4, 1915. According to the best biography of the Kolehmainens, William migrated to the US in 1910 but moved to Scotland when he became a professional pedestrian in 1911. In subsequent years, he lived and raced on both sides of the Atlantic, never settling back in Finland. Viita, *Hymyilevä Hannes*, 102, 107–9, 165–6, 188.
17. Flanagan, MacDonald, and McGrath were part of the famed 'Irish Whales', the Irish-American weight throwers on the IAAC. Flanagan was born in Ireland and immigrated to the US in 1896. He won top honours in the hammer throw for the US in the 1900, 1904 and 1908 Olympics. MacDonald was also Irish by birth and later migrated to the United States. He won the shot put gold medal in the 1912 Olympics and the 56-pound weight throw in the 1920 Olympics. McGrath was also born in Ireland and migrated to the US. He won hammer-throw gold in the 1912 Olympics and silver medals in the 1908 and 1924 games. Abel Kiviat was an American distance runner of Jewish descent who won gold and silver medals at the 1912 Olympics. Myer Prinstein was a Jewish-American long jumper and triple jumper who was born in Poland and immigrated to the US in 1883. He won four Olympic crowns and finished second once in the 1900 and 1904 Olympics, and at the 1906 'Intercalated' Olympics. John B. Taylor was an African American sprinter who won a gold medal at the 1908 Olympics. See Dyreson, *Making the American Team*; Dyreson, *Crafting Patriotism for Global Domination*; Katchen, *Abel Kiviat*.
18. 'Sporting Views and Reviews', *Montreal Star*, September 25, 1912 (Katchen collection).
19. 'Smooth Stride Chief Asset of Kolehmainen', *New York Times*, March 5, 1916. Thirteen IAAC members competed in track at Stockholm, including Kolehmainen rivals George Bonhag and Abel Kiviat, as well as Pat MacDonald, Mel Sheppard, Matt McGrath, Jim Duncan, Alvah Meyer, all of whom medalled. Interestingly, as Erkki Vettenniemi points out, the IAAC had been William Kolehmainen's first American club in 1910, and the Finns tried to recruit Robertson to coach in Finland before the Stockholm games. Vettenniemi, 'Why Did the "Flying Finns" Walk?'.
20. Katchen, *Abel Kiviat*; Llewellyn, "'Viva l'Italia! Viva l'Italia!'", 710–36; Vincent, *The Rise and Fall of American Sport*, 58–87.
21. 'Kiviat Breaks Own Mile Record by One Second – Kolehmainen Runs Fast Five Miles', *New York Times*, September 22, 1912.

22. Strobino was an Italian-American runner from South Paterson, New Jersey, who won a bronze medal for the US in the 1912 Olympic marathon and became a national 'melting-pot' hero. Kiviat won a gold medal in the 1912 Olympics as a member of the winning US team in the 3000-m cross-country race. Kiviat finished second to Kolehmainen in the individual results from the race. Kiviat also earned a silver medal in the 1500 m. A Jewish-American star and a teammate of Kolehmainen's on the IAAC, he was a national 'melting pot' hero. Bonhag, also a teammate of Kolehmainen's on the IAAC, ran to gold with Kiviat at Stockholm in the 3000-m team race. Bonhag finished fifth in the individual results. Kramer and Smith each won several AAU national championships in various distance running events. On these 'melting pot' Olympians, see Dyreson, *Making the American Team*; Katchen, *Abel Kiviat*.
23. 'Lill New President of Athletic Union: Boston Man Elected as Head of Amateur Body to Succeed Kirby', *New York Times*, November 18, 1913.
24. For a masterful account of this ethnic strategy in the boxing industry, see Gorn, *The Manly Art*.
25. Howard Valentine, 'Hannes Kolehmainen to Try the Boards Tomorrow', *New York Globe*, November 8, 1912 (Katchen collection).
26. 'Selections for an All-American Team', *New York Times*, January 4, 1914.
27. 'Kolehmainen Runs Kiviat Dead Heat: Judges Unable to Separate the Champions at Finish of Two-Mile Match Race', *New York Times*, October 13, 1912.
28. Howard Valentine, 'Hannes at Last Gets a Beating', *New York Globe*, November 11, 1912 (Katchen collection).
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- Mention the Flying Finn to a sporting enthusiast and he most likely will think of PaavoNurmi, a hero of the nineteen-twenties. But the first runner to be known as the Flying Finn was HannesKolehmainen, 'the Nurmi of days gone by', as one observer put it.

The American death notice made no mention of his brother William, the original Flying Finn, who had competed in the US before he accompanied Hannes on his 1912 journey.

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